

MINUTES FOR THE ASHLAND CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Wednesday, July 26, 2017
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

1. Call to Order

Chair Marni Koopman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Mark Weir, Risa Buck, Roxane Biegel-Coryell, Jamie Rosenthal, Bryan Sohl, James McGinnis, and David Sommer were present. Staff member Adam Hanks was present. Commissioner David Sommer was late. Commissioner Cara Cruickshank and Council Liaison Traci Darrow were absent.

2. Announcements

The next commission meeting will be August 23, 2017.

Group discussed the upcoming meeting calendar and agreed to combine the November and December meetings into one meeting on December 13th.

3. Public Forum

Huelz Gutchen – stated that changes happening soon to energy production and use need to be fully studied. They have already caused lots of upheaval and concern. He stated if we use ½ as much electricity as we currently do, that's equal to adding twice as many solar panels. This means efficiency is more important than generation. BPA gives us lots of efficiency rebates and if we reduced more BPA would be excited. If we install a little solar, though, they would be upset and will charge us more. This is due to the contract we signed years ago. He stated we don't actually get any of our electrons from the Bonneville dam, that the sources are all from an old program created in the 1940s and 1950s, before solar panels. BPA is now looking into solar but it needs to be studied more to see how it evolves. He stated that contracts can be re-written.

Sohl asked for clarification on BPA contracts. Hanks gave information on the issues related to large-scale solar production. The contract concerns don't apply for small-scale installations. Buck asked if this means small-scale is a way to achieve the 10x20 ordinance. Hanks gave information about some possible smaller-scale options.

Group agreed to move new business to earlier in the agenda, as Sohl must depart early.

4. New Business

Climate & Energy Action Plan Update – Sohl gave an update on the discussion from the Council meeting. He stated that Council decided to do an ad hoc committee, rather than a full-committee at this time. Hanks gave additional details of the Council decision and the next steps. Sohl gave an overview of the discussion Council had regarding goals and targets. Group discussed their feelings about the decision.

5. Reports/ Presentations/ Updates

Recology Quarterly Update – Rosenthal gave an update of recent and upcoming Recology activities including:

- They are focusing on preventing, “wishful recycling” - i.e. things which cannot be recycled but frequently are placed in recycle bins.
- The Household Hazardous Waste event, which went from 506 vehicles in 2016 to 584 in 2017. There were 62,000 pounds of waste.
- She reminded the group that for the Household Hazardous Waste event, the waste haulers pay \$125 per car but only charge \$5 per car. This is why the event can’t occur on a more frequent basis.
- The Firewise Clean-up Day went well, with about 100 vehicles attending. They are working to find ways to increase participation next year.
- On 4th of July Recology introduced “Buddy Blue”, their recycling mascot. The parade was a fun introduction to Buddy and they hope it’s a useful learning tool.
- Also on 4th of July they provided 44 clear-stream bins. A few of the redeemable bags were taken, but they were overall impressed by the low levels of contamination in the bins.
- The first “Lend Me a Plate” program went well. They will continue with a “soft” opening of the program over the next few months.
- Planning for the Bear Creek Salmon Festival is underway.

City Conservation Programs and Operations – Hanks stated that there isn’t much of an update other than the 10x20 project, which he covered earlier in the meeting. McGinnis asked if there are any discussions on land swaps or purchases with SO Land Conservancy to achieve both solar installation and trail easements? Hanks gave an update on some of the options to achieve 10x20 through smaller-scale projects, which seems to have more potential and higher co-benefits. Additionally, mixing trail easements with the wastewater treatment plan needs (that the property was originally purchased for) seem to be a good mix.

Group discussed ways in which the City could partner with commercial buildings to install solar throughout town.

Koopman wondered if the group had any interest in creating a statement in support of using the Imperatrice property for purposes other than a solar farm.

Weir/Sohl m/s to create a statement asking that the City Council support both the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy and the Parks Commission in moving forward with conserving the Imperatrice property for natural resources and recreational purposes. Discussion: Weir stated that his intent is to try and put a flag in the sand that conservation of this space should take priority. He wants to support SO Land Conservancy and their recognition of what is on that site (species-wise) as well as the value of open space to the Ashland community. Sohl stated that he has mixed feelings about the whole thing. On the one hand, any power generation has tradeoffs and consequences and we need to pick our poison. On the other, he agrees that there are many more degraded locations that should be used first. Ultimately he thinks there is value in using a portion of the property for solar and preserve the rest.

Buck wondered if there was a chance to use the site as a solar demonstration site, rather than a full solar park, though understands that’s probably too costly. She thinks there must be a way to balance all the multiple uses of the space. Hanks informed her that a solar demonstration is being

considered closer to the wastewater treatment plant, which would be more accessible by the public.

Koopman stated that she was struck by the aerial photo of the property and how much connectivity could be provided by the property. She also wants serious consideration of the high-value species which need to be protected. The best practice in climate adaptation is to not do any additional damage to natural resources. McGinnis stated that he is also concerned with the co-benefits provided by the property. He understands the desire to have solar panels to show the world that we're doing something but doesn't think that using this property is economically viable. Additionally, we need to remember that the land was purchased for wastewater treatment plant needs and if they had been using it as originally intended then it wouldn't be available now for any of the uses we're now debating. Beigel-Coryell stated that she agrees that other options are more viable.

Rosenthal stated that she's curious to know what are the potential negative effects of solar on an area. Weir gave details on the amount of concrete needed, wear and tear on roads, climate change for species whose habitat would change with the new shade, and environmental damage in other countries who produce the solar panels. Sommer stated he agrees with Weir about the negative effects, and would add that replacement cycles of solar are rather daunting, even without taking into account potential damage or vandalism costs.

Voice Vote: 8 ayes, 1 nay. Motion Passes.

Commissioner Sohl departed at 7:10 p.m.

Water Subcommittee – Buck stated they met with grey water installer, Karen Taylor, who will be doing an installation on September 30th for education purposes. City Water Conservation staff will help organize publicizing and certificates for continuing education. They are hoping to focus on having contractors attend the installation.

Council Update – Hanks apologized for not bringing this up at the last meeting, but the annual presentation by the commission to Council is scheduled for August 15. He drafted an update for Koopman and Buck to edit and present.

6. Old Business

Sneak Preview Column – Group discussion potential article topics and agreed to the following:

- September – Laundry to Landscape article, possibly written by staff member Julie Smitherman
- October – Storm Drains, by Cruickshank (she should tee-up the November article)
- November – Leaf Bag program, by Rosenthal
- December – CEAP ordinances (the big picture on where we are), by McGinnis
- January – possibly an article about conservation successes at the ASD, by Sommer

Conservation Commission Goal Setting – Koopman stated that the group should probably set goals for next year. Group generally agreed to use the next meeting as their goal setting session. They also agreed to send any proposed goals to Koopman to kick-off the discussion.

7. Wrap Up

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Assistant